

CATCHING UP TO THE CORE: COMMON SENSE STRATEGIES FOR ACCELERATING ACCESS TO THE COMMON CORE IN CALIFORNIA

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Catching Up to the Core:

Common Sense Strategies for Accelerating Access to the Common Core in California

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Historically, California has been a leader in standards-based education reform. The state's K-12 standards are some of the strongest in the nation.¹ In 2010, the State Board of Education joined 45 other states and the District of Columbia in adopting the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).² Then in 2011, the board began collaborating with the 24 other states belonging to the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced) to develop a student assessment system aligned to the CCSS.³

Through these steps, California policymakers acknowledged the need for a new set of standards and assessments that aligned to national and international measures of college and career readiness. They also positioned the state to take, once again, a leading role in implementing standards-based education reform. Yet, our review of CCSS implementation suggests that rather than build upon its history of leadership, California has lagged behind other states, leaving hundreds of districts and thousands of schools without meaningful support. While a number of pioneering California districts have sought to fill this vacuum with their own efforts, many more are waiting for leadership from the state department of education.

The failure of state leadership to accelerate Common Core implementation will have serious consequences for millions of California students. The CCSS establish expectations for mathematics and language arts that are calibrated to college and career readiness, and are aligned to new state assessments coming online in 2014-15. Failing to prepare for these changes through broad-based professional development, instructional materials alignment, improvements in district and school technology infrastructure, and alignment with higher education will cause millions of California students to fall farther behind their peers in other states. For low-income, Latino, African-American, and English learner students, who constitute the vast majority of our student population, the state's failure to provide them access to high-quality, standards-based instruction will leave them even more unprepared for college and the workplace.

In this paper, we examine the consequences of California's lagging implementation of the Common Core. We highlight the benefits of the CCSS, and offer recommendations to accelerate California's progress based on promising strategies being used in other states and some California districts. By adopting these recommendations, California's education leaders can accelerate the pace of Common Core implementation and give our students a real shot at finishing high school prepared to accomplish their college and career dreams.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: DEEPER, MORE RIGOROUS, AND COMPARABLE ACROSS STATES

To succeed in college and today's workplace, California students must have access to rigorous academic standards and high-quality instruction. The economic imperative is clear: nearly 80 percent of jobs require postsecondary education or training.⁴ To fill workplace needs over the next two decades,

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California will need 2.3 million more college degrees and technical certificates than it is currently projected to produce.⁵ We simply cannot meet these economic needs without improving college and career outcomes for our low-income, Latino, and African-American students.

The research- and evidence-based CCSS have the potential to help our schools elevate the academic performance of all students while also addressing the pervasive gaps that separate students.⁶ Developed by teachers, school administrators, postsecondary educators, and content experts, the CCSS define the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses and in workforce training programs.⁷ The CCSS build upon the recognized strengths of the California state standards, while also offering specific improvements, including:

- **Reducing the number of standards:** In 2010, nearly two-thirds of California teachers indicated that the state had too many content standards, which inhibited teachers from delving deeply into the concepts outlined in the standards frameworks; and 45 percent reported the state’s standards were not clear enough.⁸ The CCSS are streamlined and focused on depth of content knowledge rather than breadth. Instead of the “mile-wide and inch-deep” curricula that both overwhelm teachers and predispose students to grasp only a superficial understanding of critical concepts, the CCSS are designed to support project-based learning and differentiated instruction. Instead of rushing through curriculum to cover the standards, teachers can focus on teaching key concepts and providing both additional supports to struggling students and enrichment to accelerated learners.
- **Increasing academic rigor:** The CCSS demand more academic rigor of students, provide improved precision about the integration and progression of content and skills across the grade levels, and promote greater depth and breadth of reading materials than the state’s current standards.⁹ For example, the English language arts (ELA) and literacy standards demand that literacy be taught

across subject areas and that content and skills spiral up through the grade levels in a logical progression. Because the CCSS are benchmarked to college and 21st century career expectations, they should support a more streamlined transition to college, which in turn should reduce the number of students required to take costly, and often ineffective, remedial courses upon entering postsecondary institutions.

- **Increasing the emphasis on content-rich nonfiction and academic language:** The CCSS align with the demands students are likely to meet in college and the workplace. For the more than 1.4 million English learners (ELs) in California, the CCSS signal a fundamental shift in expectations that demand more sophisticated language use. In Orange County’s Santa Ana Unified School District, CCSS implementation plans deliberately focus on supporting English learners, with teachers collaborating to create unit and lesson plans in partnership with experts in the EL field. Table 1 summarizes the key instructional shifts teachers of the state’s more than 6 million students will need to make so their curriculum and practice align with the Common Core.
- **Allowing for cross-state comparability, portability, and resource sharing:** The CCSS allow policymakers, educators, and community members to compare student performance against the same set of standards across states. Consistent expectations across the country will also help create greater stability for students and/or teachers who move from one state to another. Because states will be working from the same set of standards, stakeholders can leverage broad-based sharing of best practices, instructional materials, and professional development. This type of collective knowledge sharing can result in significant cost savings. For example, educational leaders from Massachusetts, New York, and Rhode Island are collaborating across state lines to develop high-quality, CCSS-aligned instructional and professional development materials.¹⁰

TABLE 1: Key instructional shifts required by the CCSS

English Language Arts and Literacy	Mathematics
More informational texts: Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction	Greater focus: Fewer topics at greater depth
Less text-to-self analyses: Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text	Coherent progression through grade levels: Each standard is an extension of prior learning
Fewer adapted texts: Regular practice with complex texts	More emphasis on conceptual understanding of key concepts, while also maintaining focus on procedural skill and fluency in calculation
All teachers more explicitly responsible for literacy: Emphasis on literacy and use of academic language across content areas	More integration of math in science and technical subjects: Flexibly applying math in context and within other content areas

STANDARDS IN ACTION: HOW CURRENT CALIFORNIA CONTENT STANDARDS AND TASKS COMPARE TO THE CCSS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

The content standards currently used in California describe discrete sub-skills that, if added together, presumably will lead to increased reading comprehension. In contrast, the CCSS not only define a grade-by-grade “staircase” of increasing text complexity, but also demand that students show a “steadily growing ability to discern more from and make fuller use of texts, including making an increasing number of connections among ideas and between texts.”¹¹

Grade Level	California ELA Content Standards (1997): Literary Response and Analysis (Standard 3.0)	CCSS for ELA and Literacy (2010): Reading Standards for Literature, Key Ideas, and Details (Standard RL.K/4/9.3)
Kindergarten	Distinguish fantasy from realistic text.	With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.
Fourth grade	Describe the structural differences of various imaginative forms of literature, including fantasies, fables, myths, legends, and fairy tales.	Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character’s thoughts, words, or actions).
Ninth grade	Articulate the relationship between the expressed purposes and the characteristics of different forms of dramatic literature (e.g., comedy, tragedy, drama, dramatic monologue).	Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

To teach to these standards, educators will need to shift from teaching rote tasks designed to assess discrete skills and narrow content knowledge to instructing students to closely read complex texts and engage in academic discourse about their content. In addition, students must engage in more persuasive and explanatory writing than the simpler narrative writing assigned to California students over the last two decades. The chart below compares a typical classroom task aligned to the current ninth-grade California standards with a CCSS task developed by teachers in another state.

Grade Level	Typical Task based on California ELA Content Standard: Literary Response and Analysis ¹²	Example Task developed for CCSS for ELA and Literacy: Literature, Key Ideas, and Details ¹³
Ninth grade	In <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> , Atticus states that it is his moral obligation to defend Tom Robinson: “. . .before I can live with other folks I’ve got to live with myself. The one thing that doesn’t abide by majority rule is a person’s conscience.” What does it mean to have integrity, honesty, or a conscience? How important are these characteristics? Tell about a time when you have noticed someone behaving according to their moral conscience, integrity, or a lack thereof.	How does Harper Lee use characters and events in <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> to define courage? After reading Part One of <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> , write an essay that defines courage and explains how three different characters show courage. Support your discussion with evidence from the text(s). What conclusions or implications can you draw?

IMPLEMENTING THE COMMON CORE EQUITABLY AND EFFECTIVELY

Clearly, instruction in California schools must change to meet the demands of the Common Core. That change will not happen on its own; it requires strong leadership and support from the state. In particular, state leaders must address a variety of interrelated policies, including:

- 1. Professional Development Content and Delivery:**
Prepare teachers across the state to teach to the new standards.
- 2. Instructional Supports and Materials Alignment to the CCSS:** Ensure high quality CCSS-aligned basic and supplemental instructional materials are available in all districts and schools.
- 3. Implementation Costs and Technology Infrastructure:**
Address the costs associated with implementation, including technology costs associated with expanding infrastructure and capacity.
- 4. Alignment of the CCSS with Higher Education:** Align systems of higher education with the CCSS, particularly around teacher preparation programs and credentialing requirements.

Over the past two years, state leaders have characterized these core elements of CCSS implementation as insurmountable barriers and used them as excuses for inaction. And although momentum has begun to increase, the California Department of Education (CDE) has been slow to engage meaningfully in implementation efforts that prepare educators for the instructional shifts of the CCSS, slow to inform the general public, and slow to ensure that core and supplementary instructional materials meet rigorous criteria. (For more details on California’s implementation efforts, see “Implementation of the CCSS: California’s Progress to Date” on page 8.)

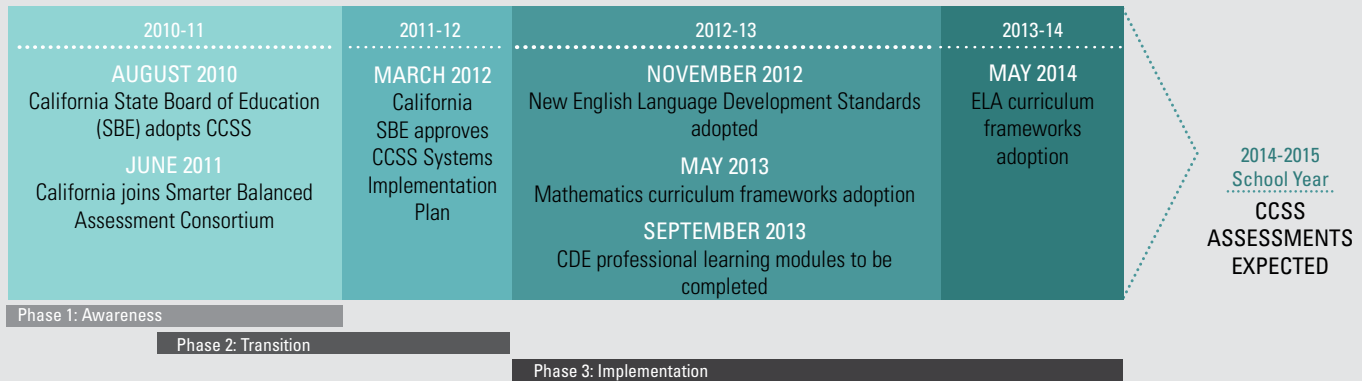
In contrast, numerous states and pioneering California districts have addressed each of these areas in ways that should inform California’s plans and allow the state’s 6 million students to fully access the benefits of the Common Core. In the absence of state leadership, implementation will be slow and uneven, leaving students in many districts without the opportunity to access and master the new standards.

COMPARATIVE TIMELINES OF CCSS IMPLEMENTATION

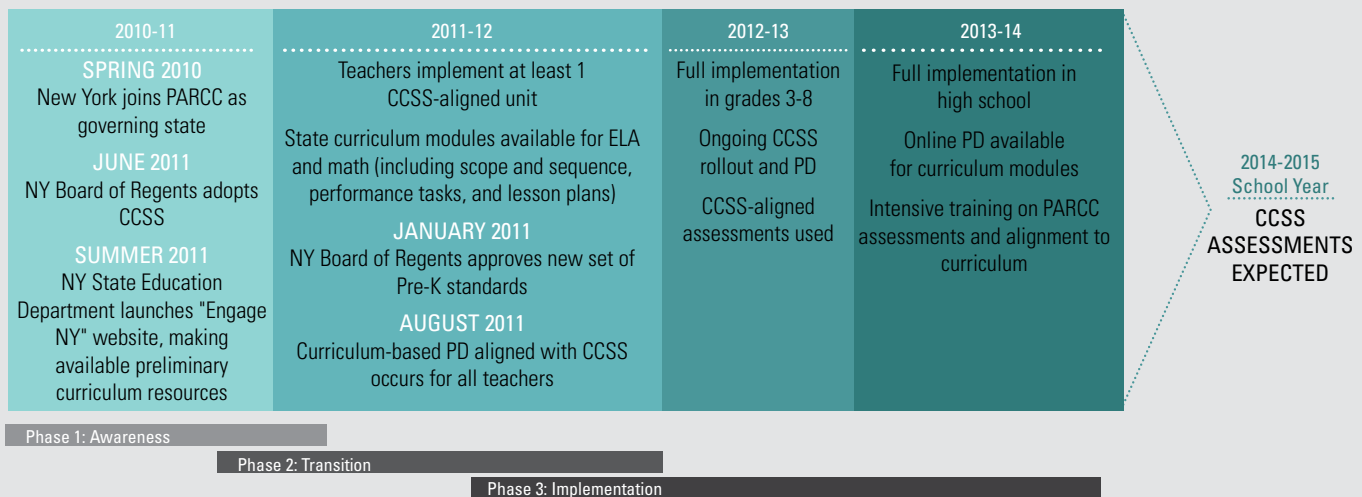
In contrast to California, other states more quickly aligned myriad policies related to the CCSS, created coherent systems of professional development, and initiated collaborations with other states to benefit from economies of scale. For example, the New York State Education Department made curriculum units, modules, and other educator resources available in the summer of 2012. And at the start of the 2012-13 academic year, all ELA and math instruction across New York state is expected to align to the Common Core. It took two years for the California Department of Education (CDE) to develop an implementation plan, but it took only three months for Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) to convene stakeholders and draft an implementation plan.

FIGURE 1: Comparative Timelines of CCSS Implementation in California, New York, and Sacramento Unified School District

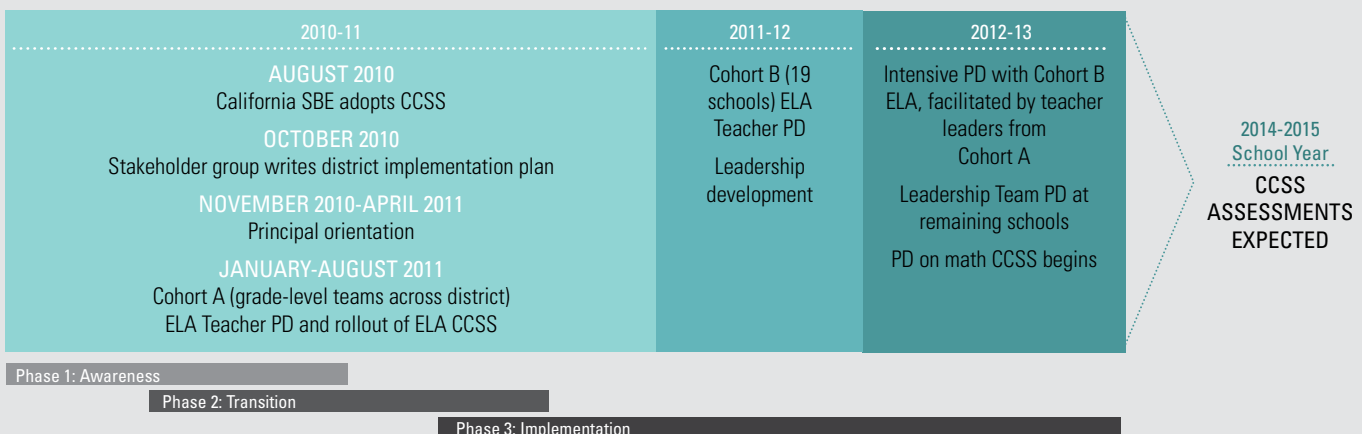
CALIFORNIA CCSS IMPLEMENTATION



NEW YORK STATE CCSS IMPLEMENTATION¹⁴



SACRAMENTO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT CCSS IMPLEMENTATION



1. Professional Development Content and Delivery

Teachers are by far the most important in-school factor in determining student success and school improvement.¹⁵ The potential of the CCSS will only be realized by strengthening educators' capacity to provide standards-based instruction that emphasizes critical thinking skills and pushes all students towards achieving greater depths of understanding.

Absent clear information about what the Common Core standards require and without supports to ensure the implementation of rigorous expectations, teachers may struggle to adequately and equitably implement the standards. Research and experience confirm that poor students and students of color are more likely than their more advantaged peers to receive low-level assignments.¹⁶ Having rigorous standards does not guarantee California's high-need students can access or master them, and if students do not master them, such standards are meaningless.

Nevertheless, the state must play a more active role in ensuring teachers are receiving the high-quality professional development they need to incorporate the new standards into their instructional practice. Throughout the nation, districts and states are leveraging CCSS implementation as a mechanism for pedagogical reform, replacing the one-time workshop and episodic professional development with sustained opportunities to build educators' content knowledge and improve instruction.

Unfortunately, in California, these efforts are scattered among the state's 1000 districts, leaving most districts and schools on their own. To ensure equity, educators in large and small districts should have extensive opportunities for targeted professional development that help them fully grasp the demands of the CCSS; plan lessons and deliver instruction that are aligned with the CCSS; and evaluate student learning through the use of formative and interim assessments.



Lessons for California:

Teachers can be trained quickly and effectively using a modularized, regionalized, and/or online approach.

PROMISING PRACTICES IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONTENT AND DELIVERY

SACRAMENTO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Immediately following state adoption of the CCSS in 2010, district leaders in Sacramento City Unified School District began collaborating with a group of stakeholders, including teachers, principals, parents, students, and representatives of local higher education institutions to map out a district-wide implementation plan. To cope with budget constraints, the district initiated a staged implementation of the CCSS, beginning with the standards for English language arts.¹⁷

In the first year, principals and volunteer teachers used the district's existing process of data inquiry and analysis to begin implementing the Common Core ELA and literacy standards. In the summer of 2011, they expanded this work to a second cohort of teachers in 19 schools. The teacher leaders from these two cohorts are now playing a leadership role in the next phase of implementation that includes professional development for the ELA teachers in the remaining schools. Meanwhile, they are also preparing for Common Core math professional development in 2012-13. Through this process, they have identified high-quality professional development tools from other states. In addition, through SCUSD's membership in the California Office to Reform Education (CORE) collaborative, they are developing Common Core-aligned classroom tasks that can be used by teachers in districts throughout the state.

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

To ensure equitable implementation of the CCSS across the state, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) built a regionalized professional development model. In fall 2011, ODE began training math and ELA teachers directly, reaching thousands of additional teachers through regional "train-the-trainer" offerings.¹⁸ During the 2010-11 school year, trained regional staff facilitated statewide stakeholder outreach and professional development to increase awareness and understanding of the standards and model curricula. Subsequently during 2011-12, the regional professional development focused on generating a deep understanding of the standards, as well as spurring instructional and curriculum revision. In following years, the regionalized professional development will target specific content areas, grade levels, and teachers of specific populations, including English learners, students with disabilities, and gifted and talented students. This regionalized professional development also will extend to higher education faculty.

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Georgia Department of Education is providing high-quality professional development through technology. They have partnered with Georgia Public Broadcasting to produce professional learning video sessions of grade-level ELA, mathematics, history/social studies, science, and technical subject standards. The site also incorporates viewer feedback to both monitor and improve the quality of the professional development. To verify participation, teachers receive a certificate.

2. Instructional Supports and Materials Alignment to the CCSS

The state has a responsibility to provide or direct teachers to instructional supports and materials that are aligned to the CCSS. Educators will need comprehensive, well-organized, quality resources that don't just tell them what standards to teach but offer support with how to teach them. Although the state's curriculum frameworks are intended to guide educators in curriculum development, the state must provide more resources for teachers and students in districts without the capacity to create strong instructional supports from these frameworks. Inequitable resources too often translate to inequitable instruction, and students — disproportionately low-income students, English learners, and other students of color — pay the price.

As more open-source materials become available and as vendors pitch new materials "aligned to the Core," the CDE must develop processes to gauge the quality of instructional and supplementary materials. The CDE must ensure quality control on the selection of curricular and supplementary content based on evidence of effectiveness. The state could partner with other states or content-area experts to create a product review center that houses only the highest quality materials.



Lessons for California:

There is a wealth of instructional materials being created in California and across the country; the state should act as an arbiter of quality.

PROMISING PRACTICES IN INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORTS AND MATERIALS

CALIFORNIA OFFICE TO REFORM EDUCATION (CORE)

The eight school districts belonging to the California Office to Reform Education (CORE) — Clovis, Fresno, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Oakland, Sacramento City, San Francisco, and Sanger Unified School Districts — are collaborating to align assessments, instructional materials, and professional development to effectively implement the CCSS. In June 2012, CORE organized the Summer Design Institute where teachers collaborated in grade-level design teams to develop a set of CCSS-aligned modules, alongside experts in the field. These modules consist of formative assessment tasks for use in the classroom, scoring rubrics, teacher directions, and student work examples. This cohort of teacher and district leaders returned home to replicate this process and develop additional modules for field testing. CORE districts planned to pilot these modules during the fall of 2012 and will provide these performance task modules in an open-source context so that they are available for non-CORE district leaders and teachers.¹⁹

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The largest school district in the country, the New York City Department of Education, created an online Common Core Library that houses a number of instructional resources for educators, including CCSS-aligned tasks embedded within units of study for K-12 literacy and math. Each unit includes rubrics, annotated student work (including an interactive process where users can compare different levels of work), and instructional supports for English learners and students with disabilities. A virtual training video accompanies the modules. The Department has also created a document that specifies instructional expectations for the current school year and has linked professional development to these expectations.

MULTI-STATE ALLIANCE: SHARED LEARNING COLLABORATIVE

Five states — New York, Illinois, Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Colorado — are working through the Shared Learning Collaborative (SLC) to develop and pilot a comprehensive set of open platform resources. Delaware, Kentucky, Georgia, and Louisiana will join in early 2013, and based on the lessons learned in the pilot program, the goal is to make the services available to all interested states. Coordinated by the Council of Chief State School Officers, the goal is to provide teachers with high-quality, CCSS-aligned materials, such as teacher-delivered lessons, self-paced online courses, educational games, video lectures, online tutoring, simulations, and group projects. The SLC is also building the technology infrastructure to allow states and districts to integrate student data that currently exist in different systems and formats and make it available to such applications as data dashboards, which display student data in a simple and easy-to-use format.

3. Implementation Costs and Technology Infrastructure

Estimates of the cost of CCSS implementation vary depending on how California chooses to approach professional development delivery methods and materials adoption.²⁰ In terms of CCSS-aligned instructional materials, costs will be offset by access to a national market of materials and greater price competition. These costs can also be mitigated by repurposing funds. For example, dollars used to buy traditional textbooks could be redirected to professional development opportunities as many instructional materials will be available as open-source materials.

The greatest cost of implementation will likely come from ensuring that all schools have reliable technology infrastructure for online assessments in 2014-15. To ensure that all schools have the elements necessary to be able to test all eligible test-takers within the state's testing window, schools must have sufficient and secure bandwidth, an appropriate number of secured computers available for testing, dependable equipment, and technologically competent staff. Unfortunately, California schools have varying levels of use of, and capacity for, both computers and bandwidth.

As a first step toward addressing concerns associated with deploying online assessments, 42 percent of schools have reported how well-equipped they are for administering the Smarter Balanced assessments using the Web-based "Technology Readiness Tool." The data collected indicate that respondents have serious concerns about the capacity and expertise of their schools' technology support staff.²¹ It remains unclear how the state and districts will act on the findings of the survey.

While it is a priority for all California schools to have the necessary infrastructure and devices to deliver online assessments, the transition to computer-based testing should also be viewed in the context of the state's new focus on technology-enhanced learning. Assessment-ready devices should be used not just during testing times; rather, they should be integrated into students' overall learning experiences.²² One potential funding strategy is to redirect funds currently used for instructional technology to cover the costs of assessment technology. The state could also encourage public-private partnerships to match high-need districts with private business or philanthropic partners, or seek additional revenues through a statewide technology infrastructure bond.

PROMISING PRACTICES IN IMPLEMENTATION COSTS AND TECHNOLOGY

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

In 2011, the Governor amended New York state law to allow districts greater flexibility in how they use instructional materials and how dollars are allocated for the purchase of those aids. New York state defines "instructional material aids" to include textbooks, library materials, computer software, and instructional computer hardware. Under the new provisions, a school district may spend more than its maximum allocation in any one of the areas by designating available aid in the other categories (with the exception of library materials aid). In other words, districts can use portions of state textbook aid for instructional software and hardware purchases.

RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

As a result of a preliminary survey of access to technology in schools across the state, officials in Rhode Island realized districts needed assistance to improve school infrastructure, specifically in securing bandwidth as well as the necessary equipment to provide wireless access to all classrooms (sufficient number of electrical outlets, wiring, and network controllers for instance). State education officials have proposed a \$20 million Technology Infrastructure Bond to improve classroom and building infrastructure over the next three to five years. The Technology Bond is currently pending official inclusion in the governor's budget and, later, legislative approval. There has been strong state leadership to prepare the proposal for the bond.²³



Lessons for California:

Technology costs can be mitigated by repurposing dollars and creatively generating new revenues, including capital bonds and/or public-private partnerships.

4. Alignment of the CCSS to Higher Education Placement Requirements and Credentialing

Because the CCSS were developed collaboratively between K-12 and higher education leaders with the goal of defining a shared vision of the knowledge and skills necessary for postsecondary success, they should serve as the anchor for overdue P-16 alignment efforts. Specifically, the CCSS provide an opportunity to vertically align first-year, credit-bearing college and university courses as a logical progression from the CCSS. This may mean adjustments to current first-year, credit-bearing courses, developmental modules or courses, and placement assessments to avoid repeating content covered in the CCSS.

The state must also take an active role to ensure teacher preparation programs and credentialing requirements are aligned to support effective instruction of the CCSS. Given our state's demographics, in which 95 percent of teachers teach one or more English learners, this is particularly true for the certification requirements governing the California Teacher of English Learner (CTEL) and English-Language Development (ELD) endorsements.²⁴ The California Teacher Credentialing Commission (CTCC) should examine certification requirements to ensure alignment with the enhanced linguistic demands and shift in pedagogical practices required of the CCSS and the new ELD standards.²⁵

PROMISING PRACTICES IN ALIGNMENT WITH HIGHER EDUCATION

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Kentucky — the first state to adopt the CCSS — has designed a comprehensive implementation strategy that includes engaging higher education, despite a budget crisis, high unemployment rate, and an initial lack of supplemental federal dollars (Race to the Top, for example). The Kentucky Board of Education, the Council on Postsecondary Education, and the Education Professional Standards Board signed a resolution directing their respective agencies to implement the CCSS in ELA and math in a manner that formalizes the integration of standards into K–12 curriculum, teacher preparation programs, and other higher education activities. With strong leaders at the state-level in both K-12 and higher education, and effective communication among stakeholders, Kentucky has enacted regulations to define common standards for admission and remediation in all public institutions of higher education.²⁶

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Tennessee is developing a statewide curriculum for integrating the CCSS into pre-service training to ensure that graduates of teacher preparation programs are fully prepared to teach to the Common Core.²⁷ This curriculum will focus on increasing instructional rigor, differentiated instruction to bring all students to grade level, and preparation for the new assessment system. Furthermore, teacher education faculty will be trained to support the transition to the CCSS in their teacher credentialing coursework and assessments.



Lessons for California:

The CCSS offer an opportunity for greater vertical alignment between high school and postsecondary institutions in both course placement decisions and teacher preparation programs.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CCSS: CALIFORNIA'S PROGRESS TO DATE

Roughly a year and a half after the state adopted the standards, the State Board of Education approved the CCSS Systems Implementation Plan. (For a timeline, see Figure 1.) This plan identifies three major phases, culminating with full implementation of the CCSS in 2014-15:

- **PHASE 1:** Increase awareness of the CCSS, introduce the initial planning system to implement it, and establish ways to collaborate with interested parties.
- **PHASE 2:** Build resources, assess needs, establish new professional learning opportunities, and expand collaboration among stakeholders.
- **PHASE 3:** Implement new professional learning supports; fully align curriculum, instruction, and testing; and integrate these elements for all students.

In addition to the state-level plan, the CDE has advised districts to develop their own local plan for implementation based on specific needs and resources, using a template that suggests activities and describes resources that are available to help educators reach the implementation milestones.

On the legislative side, the Curriculum Support and Reform Act of 2011 (AB 250)

aims to ensure school districts have as many standards-aligned instructional materials as possible, first by replacing the existing Curriculum Development and Supplemental Materials Commission with the Instructional Quality Commission (IQC).²⁸ It tasks the IQC with recommending revised curriculum frameworks, or “classroom blueprints,” that are aligned to the CCSS, and developing criteria for the evaluation of instructional materials. AB 250 also requires the CDE to oversee the development of a set of 12-16 professional learning modules (PLMs) for teachers. These modules are intended to provide critical information and strategies to support educators in delivering curriculum aligned to the CCSS. More than a dozen PLMs are slated to be available before September 2013 (although 4 of the initial 5 have already been delayed), just one academic year before the CCSS assessments are scheduled for statewide rollout.

In addition, AB 1246 (2012) gives districts new authority to use instructional materials that are aligned to the CCSS, even if the materials are not adopted by the state board. Because the current adoption process has been suspended until the 2015-16 school year, the law allows districts to take advantage of the national market of instructional materials, but does not mandate them to purchase such materials.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CALIFORNIA

1. The CDE must do a better job of communicating the shift in standards and expectations with teachers, parents, and community members across the state.

The state must develop and implement a broad communication plan to prepare California's diverse communities for CCSS implementation. CDE outreach has been minimal. They have posted a few resources for parents on their website.

- The state should do more to engage community-based organizations in their outreach efforts, particularly to prepare communities for any changes in proficiency rates once the new assessments come online. Specifically, California could learn from other states, like Florida, that failed to effectively prepare the public when they introduced large-scale changes to their assessment system.

2. The state should provide access to high-quality professional development modules developed by local school systems, certify professional development providers, and employ a regional approach. Although the CDE posted a few online teacher training units this fall, for the most part, districts and schools are on their own when it comes to professional development.

- To further aid districts, the state should disseminate information on model professional development plans from districts, charter management organizations (CMOs), counties, and other states.
- The state should establish a certification process for professional development providers. This certification process should extend to county offices of education, nonprofits, school districts, consortia of districts, and CMOs. The process should include the opportunity for deep and meaningful feedback from districts, schools, and educators that is factored into an annual re-certification process.

3. The state should set rigorous quality standards that ensure instructional and supplemental materials are of the highest quality and fully aligned with the CCSS.

With so many public and private interests vested in the proliferation of CCSS-aligned materials, the state must play a leadership role in this process, leveraging established evaluation criteria, such as the rubrics created by the Educators Evaluating Quality Instructional Products (EQIP) collaborative. Employing these tools will better ensure high-quality, CCSS-aligned instructional and supplemental materials.

- Further, the CDE should transform its website into a more interactive and user-friendly site that offers a resource-sharing portal.
- Districts and counties should be encouraged to develop online clearinghouses of CCSS-aligned materials, and increasingly direct educators to state-certified sources of professional development and instructional materials. This way, both district and school leaders as well as teachers will be able to access the wealth of instructional tools being developed in California and throughout the nation, with assurances of quality control.

4. California can share the cost of CCSS implementation with other states, deploy cost-saving technologies, and provide critical funding through a statewide school bond focused on technology.

- Because the CCSS have been adopted across the country, California can share many of the costs of implementation by collaborating with other states to develop the requisite instructional materials, professional development resources, and assessment systems.
- Establishing priorities, aligning resources, thoughtfully repurposing funds, and looking for cost efficiencies as well as productivity gains, district and state leaders can achieve the digital conversion to support CCSS implementation and preparation for the new college- and career-ready assessments.
- Given the budgetary challenges faced by the state, leaders must consider strategies such as redirecting funds, public-private partnerships, or school technology bond measures to fill the infrastructure, network, and device gaps.

5. California should align expectations in institutions of higher education with the new standards, particularly to streamline student placement decisions and improve teacher preparation programs. The CDE's Implementation Plan declares intent to align institutions of higher education with the CCSS, but the CDE has done little to define any concrete action steps.

- The CDE should partner with K-12 and higher education stakeholders to formalize agreements that integrate the CCSS into the state's teacher preparation programs and credentialing requirements.
- They should also work with the state's university systems to define common standards for student placement in credit-bearing, non-remedial coursework upon admission to all public institutions of higher education.

6. To ensure continuous improvement, the legislature should require the CDE to contract for an independent multi-year evaluation of the CCSS implementation. This evaluation would inform stakeholders about the extent to which the standards are being effectively and equitably implemented in the state's schools, and increase the urgency for state policymakers to improve the timely implementation of the standards. At the very least, the state should be surveying teachers on a regular basis to assess the availability and quality of supports.

CONCLUSION

California has more than a decade of experience to build on as it approaches the implementation of the next generation of academic standards. Given the benefits of the Common Core and the high stakes for students, the state can no longer pass the buck of responsibility to a few pioneering districts. In a time of tight budgets and reduced personnel, it is imperative now more than ever to leverage lessons learned from some of the states and districts profiled in this report to promote a broad, rigorous, and equitable implementation of the CCSS. Realizing the stakes for their students, schools, and communities, these leaders have forged ahead. It's long past time for California's leaders to catch up.

CALL TO ACTION: WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

This brief focuses on the role of state policymakers, but communities, district and school leaders, and educators can also help accelerate CCSS implementation efforts across California.



COMMUNITIES

Demand more information from your school, district, and state leaders: Hold informational meetings for community members to help build broad understanding of what the transition to the CCSS means for your communities. Invite school, district, or state leaders to speak to groups of community members and advocate for clarity on their implementation plans, including the supports that will be offered to help students meet and educators teach to the raised expectations.

Engage parents: Parents need to know what the CCSS mean for their children. Identify and help disseminate resources that provide guidance to parents about what their children will be learning and how they can support that learning.



DISTRICT & SCHOOL LEADERS

Communication is key: Communicate how the CCSS fits with the rest of your college- and career-ready reform agenda, and how the standards address equity. Clearly communicate that rigorous content will be taught in every grade level and across content areas, so that every student is equipped to successfully compete with peers across the district, state, nation, and world.

Encourage teachers to become advocates of the CCSS: Identify a leadership corps of educators who can be trained in and lead the development and/or adaptation of CCSS-aligned instructional materials. Let educators do the talking for you; arm them with the tools they need to spread the word, share resources, and engage peers and parents in the new standards implementation.



EDUCATORS

Advocate for high-quality professional development: Recommend the type of professional development that will be necessary for successful implementation of the CCSS. Call for enhancing or replacing current professional development to align with the needs of CCSS implementation. A basic understanding of the goals and organization of the CCSS is not enough to drive instructional change.

Engage with your peers in the development and identification of high-quality resources: Collaborate with school and district peers to develop CCSS-aligned instructional materials and provide on-site support to other teachers. With your peers, evaluate resources, and identify high-quality instructional materials available from other states, districts, or other open-source materials.

NOTES

1. See, for example: Sheila B. Carmichael, Gabrielle Martino, Kathleen Porter-Magee, and W. Stephen Wilson, "The State of State Standards — and the Common Core — in 2010," Thomas B. Fordham Institute (July 2010).
2. Minnesota has only adopted the English language arts CCSS. Nebraska, Alaska, Texas, and Virginia have not adopted the CCSS.
3. The U.S. Department of Education also awarded the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) with a competitive grant to develop assessments aligned to CCSS, as part of the Race to the Top assessment grants. California was initially a PARCC member but switched to Smarter Balanced in June 2011 as one of 21 governing states.
4. Harry J. Holzer and Robert L. Lerman, "The Future of Middle-Skill Jobs," Brookings Institution (Feb. 2009), http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2009/02_middle_skill_jobs_holzer/02_middle_skill_jobs_holzer.pdf.
5. California Competes: Higher Education for a Stronger Economy, "The Road Ahead: Higher education, California's Promise, and Our Future Economy," (June 2012).
6. The CCSS development teams used a number of sources, including the frameworks for the OECD Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS); the International Baccalaureate syllabi; reports by the American Institutes for Research; standards from high-performing countries; and research conducted by Achieve, ACT, and the College Board (i.e., "Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma that Counts" by Achieve).
7. The Common Core State Standards were developed through an initiative referred to as the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers, in collaboration with teachers — specifically members of the National Education Association (NEA); American Federation of Teachers (AFT); National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM); National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE); and school administrators, postsecondary educators, content experts, and the public.
8. Scholastic and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, "Primary Sources: America's Teachers on America's Schools," Scholastic, Inc. (2010).
9. Achieve Comparison Briefs, <http://www.achieve.org/CCSS-comparison-briefs>, retrieved Aug. 6, 2012.
10. With input and feedback from practitioners, the collaborative has developed criterion-based rubrics and review processes to evaluate the quality of lessons and units aimed to support student access and mastery of the CCSS for mathematics and ELA/Literacy. The rubrics provide clear, descriptive standards for CCSS-aligned lessons; identify exemplary lessons; guide collegial review processes; and provide constructive feedback to lesson developers. The rubrics are open-source (Engageny.org), along with the slides that explain how to use each rubric.
11. National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, "Common Core State Standards English Language Arts," p. 8, National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers (2010).
12. Kristen Bowers, To Kill a Mockingbird Literature Guide (San Dimas, Calif.: Secondary Solutions, 2007).
13. Retrieved from Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) sample English language arts modules, <http://www.literacydesigncollaborative.org/resources/sample-modules/english-language-arts/>, July 26, 2012.
14. Engage NY, Common Core Toolkit, <http://engageny.org/>, accessed Aug. 29, 2012.
15. Gerald Bracey, "Value-Added Assessment Findings: Poor Kids Get Poor Teachers," Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 86, Issue 4, Dec. 1, 2004, citing Kevin Carey, "The Real Value of Teachers: If Good Teachers Matter, Why Don't We Act Like It?" Thinking K-16, Vol. 6, Issue 1, Winter 2004, with original source from Sitha Babu and Robert Mendro, "Teacher Accountability: HLM-Based Teacher Effectiveness Indices," presented at the American Education Research Association Annual Meeting (April 2003).
16. Sarah Almy, "Instructional Supports: The Missing Piece in State Education Standards," The Education Trust (March 2012).
17. Information gathered from a representative of Sacramento City Unified School District, Aug. 2012.
18. Ellen Belcher, "Future Shock: Early Common Core Implementation Lessons from Ohio," Thomas B. Fordham Institute (May 2012).
19. Information gathered from a representative of CORE, June 2012.
20. See the California Department of Education estimate from March 2012 State Board of Education meeting, Agenda Item 7; Pioneer Institute for Public Policy Research, "National Cost of Aligning States and Localities to the Common Core Standards," Accountability Works (Feb. 2012); Patrick Murphy, Elliot Regenstein, and Keith McNamara, "Putting a Price Tag on the Common Core: How Much Will Smart Implementation Cost?" Thomas B. Fordham Institute (May 2012).
21. For example, on a scale of 0-10 (with 10 indicating extreme concern, and 5 indicating neutral concern), 73 percent of respondents expressed concern over the number of technology staff available to support online testing, with 32 percent of respondents indicating extreme concern.
22. John Bailey, Carrie Schneider, and Tom Vander Ark, "Funding the Shift to Digital Learning: Three Strategies for Funding Sustainable High-Access Environments," Digital Learning Now, Getting Smart, and Foundation for Excellence in Education (2012).
23. Achieve, "Implementing Common Core State Standards and Assessments: A Workbook for State and District Leaders," March 2012.
24. Scholastic and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, "Primary Sources: America's Teachers on America's Schools," Scholastic, Inc. (2010).
25. AB 124, chaptered in 2011, required the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, in consultation with the SBE, to update, revise, and align the state's ELD standards, by grade level, to the ELA/literacy CCSS. New ELD standards were adopted in November 2012. See Robert Linqanti and Kenji Hakuta, "How Next-Generation Standards and Assessments Can Foster Success for California's English Learners," PACE (July 2012).
26. Anne Hyslop, "Getting to 2014 (and Beyond): An Introduction," Education Sector (June 2012).
27. Achieve, "Closing the Expectations Gap: 50-State Progress Report on the Alignment of K-12 Policies and Practice with the Demands of College and Career." Sept., 2012.
28. AB 250 (signed on Oct. 8, 2011 and effective on Jan. 1, 2012) requires State Board of Education policies to ensure that revised curriculum framework and evaluation criteria (of frameworks, instructional materials, etc.) are adopted for English language arts (ELA) by May 30, 2014 and for math by May 30, 2013. The bill also requires the ELA curriculum frameworks for K-12 and instructional materials for kindergarten through eighth grade (K-8) to include the English language development (ELD) standards and ELD strategies, as well as strategies to address the needs of students with disabilities in the core subjects of mathematics, science, and history-social science. See the California Department of Education website for additional information.

The Education Trust—West works for the high academic achievement of all students at all levels, pre-k through college. We expose opportunity and achievement gaps that separate students of color and low-income students from other youth, and we identify and advocate for the strategies that will forever close those gaps.



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